

The Vaunt of Man.

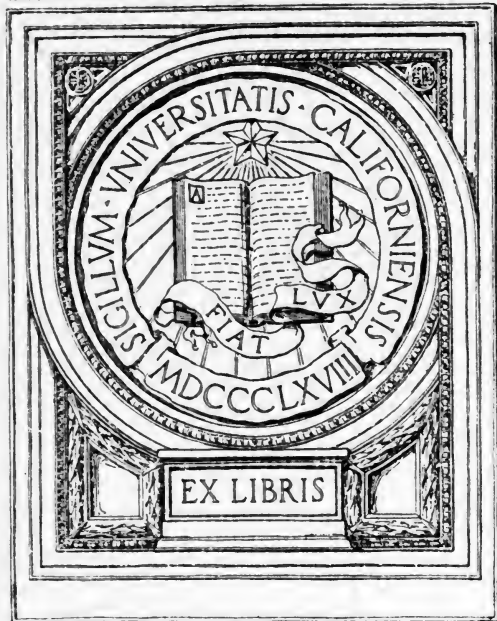
William Ellery Leonard

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The Vaunt of Man
and other poems

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IN PREPARATION

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The Vaunt of Man and other poems

William Ellery Leonard



New York
B. W. Huebsch
1912

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NO. 1000
ALPHABETIC

Printed in U. S. A.

THE SUPERScription

*White soul, too white for us who work with clay,
Sweet mistress of the gentle flowers and birds,
Harshly compelled to speak your loving words
So long but to the subtle beasts of prey:
I was your earthly husband for a day,
Too strange a nature for an eye so blue;
And yet so honest was my love to you,
I gave you something ere you went away. . . .*

*I've set no stone upon the grave out there,
Whither in all my years I shall not go;
But, conquering pain, and pity, and despair,
I bind these leaves with solemn hands and slow:
My poems — all my sacred best of life —
Be yours forever, O my wife, my wife!*

The Heavens and the Earth,
and all that is between them,
think ye we have created them
in jest!

— *The Koran.*

Se tu segui tua stella,
Non puoi fallire al glorioso
porto.

— *Dante.*

PREFACE

These rhymes record, by quite unconscious plan,
What life from year to year may mean to man.
Scarce one but had its rise in common-place,
In old experience of the human race —
And yet not one without some How or When
No man on earth can ever feel again.
I made the record that I might be free
Through mastering art, lest life should master me —
Finding in art, creating as I went,
A world more luminous and eloquent.

W. E. L.

Madison, Wisconsin,
Mid-summer, 1911.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For permission to reprint a number of the poems thanks are due to the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Century*, the *Forum*, etc. For much inspiration in the writing and help in preparation for the press I am indebted to Ludwig Lewisohn.

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The Vaunt of Man

I.

WHEN I shall make my vaunt before the Lord,
I shall not name my thrift of knowledge won:
The wingèd urns unearthed in Babylon,
The Greek palimpsest wondrously restored,
Nor what of rock or plant in field and fiord
I brought from where the Scandian rivers run,
Nor my Uranian lore of moon and sun,
Nor deep-sea soundings with the lead and cord.

But I shall boast my cunning in Romance:
How, Heart-of-Woman, along a trail in Ind
I met thee footsore on thine ancient quest
And knew thy need with manhood's swiftest glance —
Thy solemn grief so long unmedicined,
The wound thy hand was hiding in thy breast.

II.

Nor when I speak my boast before the King,
Shall I proclaim my deeds of song and sight,
My rainbow visions conjured out of night,
My island cities with ships of hope a-wing
Out in the oceans of imagining,
Nor forest hymns upon my mountain height,
Nor the loud pæans to the morning light
In rolling meters of my sea singing.

The Vaunt of Man

But I shall boast how once, O Child of Earth,
Whilst thou wert weeping in the desert South,
I, passing that way with flowers and wine and bread,
Restored for immortality the mirth
Of those blue eyes and kissed thee on the mouth
With sudden hands of joy upon thy head.

III.

O when I make my plea before our God,
I shall not boast my sufferance and pain,
The whirlwind snows that blinded on the plain,
The smoke I breathed, the lava fields I trod,
With head unhooded and burning feet unshod,
Nor fettered hours in Houses of Disdain
With anarch Ignorance and Custom Vain,
Nor strength achieved by bowing to the rod.

But I shall boast, O Bride forever Bright,
Forever young (with blossoms from the glade,
The hill, the lake I crown thee mistress of),
Delight, delight and evermore delight,
The hearth I kindled and the boat I made,
And quiet years as minister of love.

IV.

So when I make my boast before the Throne,
I shall not mention what was mine of praise,

The Vaunt of Man

The silver cup for swiftmess in the race,
Nor bossèd medals stamped with name mine own
For Turk or Tartar in Palæstra thrown,
Nor bells that pealed my battles in old days,
Graved scrolls with civic seals, nor public bays
For the deep thoughts I carved in bronze and stone.

But I shall name, O lyric Life, thy name;
Show the proud tokens, the ring, the odorous hair,
Love's fiery print upon my lips and eyes;
And strip my bosom as 'twere a thing of fame,
And say, "This glorious Lady slumbered there,
And made these arms her earthly Paradise."

Alone You Passed

ALONE you passed beyond the Golden Gate,
Toward the red Hesperus o'er the western seas
To broad-browed idols of the Japanese —
But their grim lips were silent where they sate;
Alone I sailed earth's other path of fate,
Out toward the morning star where Egypt is,
Where the Sphinx guards her bleak eternities —
But I returned, like you, forlorn and late;

Then wandering inland from each divided coast
Across the multitudinous continent,
Strangers by hill and stream without an aim,
We met even in the hour we doubted most,
And each in each achieved the great Event —
The oracle, the sacrificial flame.

O Loved and Lovely

O LOVED and lovely on the mountain crest,
O auburn hair the clouds are shining on,
White arms uplifted to the setting sun,
Prophetic eyes that see beyond the west,
O whispering voice, my tumult and my rest,
Star of the twilight next that burning one,
Which yonder in heaven holds bright dominion,
Through song of mine shalt thou be manifest!—

For from my wings thy fire hath purged the pain,
For on my eyes thy light hath poured the light,
And on my mouth is thine immortal kiss;
Nor can thy presence be bestowed in vain
On me, the Lyrist's eager acolyte,
That long hath prayed for such a task as this.

One Woman

SO incomplete, you cry?
Your service incomplete? —
O could you mark, when you are passing by,
How many watch your feet.

Of no account, you say?
Your life of narrow scope? —
O could you know, when you but kneel to pray,
How many dare to hope.

No center to your soul?
No force worth while? —
O could you guess how beautiful and whole
May be a woman's smile.

God has, in plenty, steel
Tempered for war's employ —
But needs the most for his great commonweal
The rose of peace and joy.

When Came the Moment

WHEN came the moment of your life to me,
After my evil years, I said: "At last
Is service, peace, and splendor; I am saved
In saving her." The times of summer flowers
On hills beyond the city, and of stars
By twilights on the memorable lake,
The winter's reading, and the helpfulness
In mutual old simplicities of life,
Were ours by seasons, were they not? — And still
We were two lovers to the end, despite
The alien sounds forever on the stair,
And older sorrows of a shadowy house
To which a solemn duty bound us both. . . .
Two lovers to the end . . . the awful end. . . .

To the Evening Star

WHITE star, beyond the houses and the hills,
That beaconest a solemn all-is-well
Across the twilight to the fates of men,
From out the seeming Distance; lonely star,
Companioning our uncompanioned griefs,
Till surges something of thy holy light,
Some still suffusion of immortality,
Through the hushed soul, and time and space no more,
And the divisions of the grave no more
Convince us into martyrdom: O star,
Keep, keep the child with thee until I come. . . .

II. Under the Sky

The Windward Slope

COME! — let us live upon the windward slope!
Come! — let us look, magnanimous and free!
Come! — where the sunshine gilds eternity!
Come! — where the lightning has primeval scope!
Come from the caverns of your sordid hope,
Your meager thought, ye pallid folk, with me!
Come! — where the mountains neighbor on the sea
And wild sea-twilight fronts the windward slope!

There the four regions of primordial heaven!
There the four elements and planets seven! —
And the cool torrents of essential air,
And the swift spark and luminous breath of fire,
And odorous earth and lucid water there
Feed blood and bone and spirit and desire!

Anti-rococo

I WOULD make mention of primeval things,
Oceans, horizons, rains, and winds that bear
Moist seeds from isle to isle, caves, mountain air
And echoes, clouds and shadows of their wings
On lakes or hillsides, autumns after springs
In starlight, sleep and breathing and the blare
Of life's reveille, love, birth, death and care
Of sunken graves of peasants as of kings,

The wide world over,—

O be bold, be free!

Strip off this perfumed fabric from your verse,
Tear from your windows all the silk and lace! —
And stand, man, woman, on the slope by me,
O once again before the universe,
O once again with Nature face to face!

For a Decadent

LIVE out in air! Drink the swift life of winds,
Warm o'er the summer fields and sweet with
flowers,

And buoyant with the salts of primal earth,

Or cold and vital over starry snows.

Live in the sun! and far from evil men,

To the great sun bare breast and throat and thigh,

And hail at morn with naked upstretched arms

The promise of the wide day and the sun!

Thus, plenished with an ancient strength, shalt thou

Leap from the rocks and swim the sea and reach

The island caves and bind the mermaid's hair;

Or push through brake and briar up the cliffs

Out over all the mountain gulfs of pine,

And stand with summit gods, primevally!

Rain

WHO loves the sun and stars shall love the rain ;
Who walks the mountain with the golden cloud
Shall cringe not at the mountain thunder, loud
Beyond the lightning and the hurricane.
Who swims the blue cove shall abide the main
When black with storms, still buoyant and uncowed ;
Who feels earth's light about him as a shroud,
Shall feel earth's vast, earth's elemental rain.

O love ye not the forest, bird, and flower,
And shadowy shapes of sunlight down the glen,
And moonbeams scattered in the midnight wood ?
O wait ! O listen ! Earth's revolving hour
Brings ye anon the forest rain again
And dusk and music of her ancient mood !

Natura Magna

GAZE not at hearth-flame nor at funeral pyre
Too long in dreams or tears; but rise and bare
Your souls to lightning; see the mountain flare
Forth its wild torrents of essential fire!
Sit not too long by well-springs of desire
In shadowy woodlands with the white nymphs; fare
Out to blue ocean and the sun-bright air! —
Hark! the deep voice: “Exult ye, and aspire!

“As some god’s festival on holy ground
Ye shall approach my universe afar,
Naked and swift as heroes, from all climes;
Thus ye shall fill an epos with new sound,
Thus ye shall yield new names for many a star,
And thus from ye shall date the aftertimes.”

For Husbandmen

(On the Coast.)

NO more shall thunder and the lightning's bane
Darken and terrify the populous lea —
The afternoon comes buoyant from the sea,
Like a fresh dawn across an upland plain!
The shadows sweep the purple hills again;
At mountain distance rides the rainbow free;
There is a whisper as of days to be,
And earth's new odor rises after rain

In golden steam.—

O husbandmen, go forth!
Primeval, wise, shag-browed and large of hand,
Ye workers still beneath the law of old! —
The utmost cities of the South and North
Await their health of ye; and all the land
Against late years for ye puts by its gold.

For Our Fathers' Sons

WE must be heroes! Earth's old rivers flow
But earth's religions comfort us no more,
And the old faith that looked so far of yore,
Lies, with all temples, bare to wind and snow;
But standing at our fathers' graves we know
(And this is much) that, spite of waste and war,
'Twere to deny our being to give o'er:
We shall be heroes! And for strength we go

(Will ye not go?) out to the mountains! — Still,
Though we have glossed anew the psalmist's verse,
Our help shall come from out the ancient hill,
And we shall promise largely and fulfill,
Feeling, as heroes, our unconquered will,
Part of the epic of the universe!

The Great Stone Face

PRIMEVAL Presence, enthroned upon white space,
Who feel'st the lightnings wither on thy cheek,
Whose iron lips to cloud and thunder speak,
While slumbering æons crowd thy shadowy base;
Who seest far city, stream, and planted place
And the blue sunlight on the hundredth peak —
Inexorable, calm, abiding, bleak —
Hail! genius of the mountains, awful face.

Hail and farewell! My spirit faints, and soft
The winds blow inland from eternity;
Thee 'twere not well revisiting too oft
If I would bind the sheaves allotted me —
Thee, nor the everlasting stars aloft,
Nor reaches of the irrevocable sea.

Mount Washington

I SAID: "This morn I will the vision seek;"
So in the sheer car up the mount I spun
O'er pines and shag ravines, and stepped anon
High on the iron summit, piled and bleak.
Here shone the white eternity! here peak
To peak his huge design rolled on and on —
Grand as the thunder, silent as the sun! —
Till histories, arts, religions, man were weak.

But ah, I lost the thrill, the joy, the fear;
And from a crag I murmured: "Soul can know
The kingdoms of the larger atmosphere
Only when soul toils from the place below —
O would my feet were torn with flint and brere,
Or still were wandering where the lilies grow."

For a Forest Walker

(In Franconia.)

QUAFF the mid-forest spring! Sink palms and
knees

In the deep moss and let the big rank ferns
Strike on the flushed cheek and the fevered neck,
And let thy hair, warmed in those sultry shades,
Float, with the oozy twigs and yellow leaves,
The near black water! O with pursèd lips
Quaff till thou feelst it cool in heart and frame —
Then up through pines and thickets to the light!

Yonder the valley and the mountain lake!
The sunset clouds are trembling in the waves,
The wild deer drink among the windy rocks;
And thou shalt call for joy aloud, and hear
A mountain echo that will die away
Seven times repeated on the crimson air!

A Tryst

AFTER the evil years, so long alone —
Thou in dusk chambers by the sullen wave,
I at the foothills in a shadowy cave —
O sister — spirit, we are free! Our own
Here in wild twilight is the trysting stone,
Here on the slope, which high winds lash and lave,
As seas a promontory. O be brave,
And range the starry night from zone to zone

With me, my sister!

Hesperus is before us!

Behind the mount, unseen our sorrows sleep!
Anon the constellations tower o'er us:
Great Nature, in primeval mood and deep,
Restores our love, even as she will restore us
Our light — exultant on her mountain steep!

With Mother Earth

'TIS well to spend a lucid afternoon
In the long silvery grass, with upturned eye
Noting the leaves that fret the azure sky;

'Tis well to wait the coming of the moon,
Out on the hillside, over fields of June.

'Tis well to listen, when abed we lie,
To midnight murmurs of the rain and try
To mark therein the world's primeval tune.

'Tis well to know, that (spite of death and dearth
And evil men in cities plotting ill
And friends that leave us when our thoughts are new)

The good man may abide with Mother Earth
And dream his dreams and have his visions still
And trust the Infinite to see him through.

Behind the Old House

(Among the Hills.)

BEHIND the old house beds of lettuce grow;
The winds across the dancing red-top blow;
The brook is bright with blue forget-me-nots
As when we gathered long, long years ago.

Behind the old house on a trellis nod
The sweetpease (purple o'er the goldenrod),
Whose incense, like an unseen beauty, fills
The upland morning and the fields of God.

Behind the old house, down the narrow lane,
After long years the mountain sun again!
After long years the wide primeval dawn,
Gold o'er the white mists of the midland plain!

And how those years of sorrow glorify
The fresh, free, olden things of earth and sky!

Games

A BOY I mastered exercise and game:
I threw the discus, and I drove the ball;
I ran the course, I cleared the hurdles all;
At boxing swift in parry, lunge, and aim;
A wrestler, fencer, turner; with a frame
To skate in moonlight down the river where,
On summer noondays, diving bronze and bare,
I swam the bend for joy and not for fame.

And these, with mastery of plane and saw,
Judged as traditions of wise years behind,
No less than legend, language, art, and law —
I mean as wisdom of our human kind —
I hold, with something of historic awe,
Among the assets of a noble mind.

The Wildman

BUT still the wildman calls the tameless boy;
Primeval instincts of the cave and tree,
The summons of the years that used to be,
Ages before Achilles fought at Troy,
Calls him abroad to his ancestral joy
With spear and belt and arrow; and he stands
Out on the rocks, and peers with lifted hands
For wolf to flee or wigwam to destroy.

Thus, when I mark in our museums a lance,
A feathered stick, a twisted curio,
I think with pride in my omnipotence:
“I made these things ten thousand years ago,
Where the sun set on plains that now are France,
Upon my ways from Pyrenees to Po.”

Primordial Earth

I.

I SEE that only ocean isle forlorn,
First shape, except the massy cloud at noon,
Or rolling wave against the rim of morn,
To cast a bulk of shadow. Gull nor loon
Clings to its riven cliff and scarpèd wall,
Nor splashing wrack of tangled kelp: the sea,
Mother of life to all,
Not yet will yield of her fecundity,
Even as her breath
Hath yet no odor of salt nor eery voice of death.
But ineradicably strong,
That Island, first of islands in all zones,
Divideth the immeasurable main;
The whirling cones
Of writhen water columns, far along
The highways of the lightning, strike in vain.
And under thunderheads of dying storm,
It standeth bulwarked, bleak, deform,
In ocean glow of setting sun
Or midnight silver of the gibbous moon —
The dry land hath begun;
The rest shall follow late or soon.

Primordial Earth

II.

I see the elder swamps of time;
The Reptiles fold the air beneath their wings
Athwart the sky, or drop into the slime
With slapping fin and tumbling back.
One dives, and, crossing through the water rings,
A zigzag line of bubbles lets me track
His sullen, deep meanderings;
One wallows up the oozy shore,
Crunching a speckled eel; one with a claw
Tears open the fiery bulb of some vast flower;
One licks the poison-pith with tongue and jaw
From a rent stalk of fern,
And with a lurch and turn,
Bulges a green round eye at me.
And through the sultry fogs and noxious fumes
The sun's blurred outline somewhere looms,
Nor doth it yet appear what is to be.

III.

Down a long wood I peer —
There is the Simian band.
Some swing by clasping tail and reaching hand
Among the trees,
With chatter and quick yelp.
Some scurry along on toes and knuckles or rear
Abrupt. One flings, with labored grunt and wheeze,

Primordial Earth

A thigh-bone at a fleeing whelp.
One squatting near a fungus madly scratches
A beetle from his arm-pit, muttering.
Hardby, upon the mossy patches,
Half stretched, half curled,
One sleeps and makes of sleep a hideous thing.
Who will unriddle why I laugh at this?
Or why, across the infinite abyss,
The white stars beacon the insensate world?

IV.

I see a ledge along a mountain side,
The platform of a cavern dwelling place;
And one comes out who has a bearded face,
A pelt on thigh, a club in fist,
And stripes of ochre round his arm and wrist,
With curious artistry applied.
And now he piles the leaves and bark,
And plies a stick and rubs a spark,
And blows upon the smolder;
Then stands, while mounts the smoke above his
 shoulder,
And gazes down the valley in the wide
Dawn of this autumn of the old stone age
At the sun rising out along the mist,
And, like a sovereign priest or mage,
Calls from beside the sacrificial flame
On the great sun by name.

Primordial Earth

V.

And in that lifted face,
Wherein I still may trace
In less the dusky forms uncouth and grim
Of antique nature's seeming whim —
The crag, the bulb, the saurian, the ape —
I see the Olympians taking shape:
The brow of Zeus who gives commands,
Poseidon who is lord of ships,
Ares who arms the walls for war,
Apollo with the singing lips,
And Dionysos, looser of the lands
By city, stream, or shore.
And the vast issues of a coming race
Crowd half their portent in that savage face.

The Ancient Mariner

AGES ago I ranged the outer seas,
The shimmering main that moves below the moon,
The shoreless waters of the vaulted noon,
The drizzling oceans winter could not freeze;
With halyards twisted by the Genoese,
And sails of linen from the docks of Tyre,
I bounded onward: for the western fire
Beaconed between the Gates of Hercules.

While yesterday, with hundred flags unfurled
By all the nations, dwelling either side,
I swept from Azores round the Horn to Spain,
And left behind me, circling all the world,
As aery offspring of my speed and pride,
The long smoke winnowed by the sun and rain.

The Steamer

THE steamer plows the middle sea
With smoke behind and foam before;
And through whatever nights there be
She anchors not from shore to shore:

Though head winds smite her onward form,
And waves from east to west be hurled,
Though ocean stars be hid in storm
Beyond the glimpses of the world,

Her needle tells the unseen path,
Eternal law to her desire;
And her unconquered speed she hath
In quenchless heart of flame and fire.

Coastwise

(North Shore.)

ALL night, fog-bound in murky seas we rode
Off perilous capes and nameless coasts of dread,
Our vague lights seeking, like dim ghosts in red,
The pallid regions round our dusk abode;
The moonless tides beneath us ebbed and flowed;
And unseen ships that bolder steered ahead
Shrieked weird and far, like voices of the dead,
And all night long we answered where we rode.

But with the morn the sun came vast and round,
And winds came golden o'er the wide blue sea,
And, weighing anchor in a world of light,
We scudded down the main and made the sound
And marked the port, our city of the free,
Low on the purple sky, secure and bright.

The Wreck

I KNOW where clings among the rocks and kelp,
And shelvy sands that boil at ebbing tide,
Far from the folk on whom she called for help,
Far from the fog-swept lighthouse yellow-eyed,
A battered steamer on her iron side,
With stacks inclining to the setting sun,
Like rusty cannon whose last booming died
On some abandoned fortress: she is one
With all on land or sea whose mighty works are done.

The Express

SHE comes! I hear her whistle mount the air
High o'er the howling storm, and down the black
Gulf of the station, where the level track
Shoots into night, I see her headlight flare!
The swaying bell rings out its wild beware,
The long, low smoke is trailing from her stack,
The chill draught strikes — the crowd is pressing back,
She comes, she stops — how terrible and fair!

Would mine her swift night in the windy gorge,
O'er trestles shaken with a mountain roar,
O'er snow-swept plain, by factory and forge,
By lights of cities on the inland shore,
And island beacons! — O would mine her hour
Of large experience and splendid power!

Ultima Thule

(For Commander Peary.)

IT was not for the Arctic gold and a claim at the end
of the great white trail;
Nor yet for the Arctic lore — for a map of the floe
and a graph of the gale:
But the quest came out of a primitive urge in the
blood of our common birth —
The lure of the last lone verge and the desert end of
the rolling earth.

For this he abandoned the green of the world — the
lakes and the hills and the leas,
And rivers of midsummer nations, and banks with the
corn and the vine and the trees,
And the genial zones of the planet's rains, and the belt
of the planet's flowers;
For this he abandoned all cities — their households,
their singing and sunsets and towers.

Onward, north of the Northern Lights, hungry and
cold and alone,
Eternity under his frozen feet and the snows of the
ages unknown,
With never the boom of the purple seas, nor ever a
mountain of fire,
North of the Plain of the thousand slain — who were
dead of the same desire! —

Ultima Thule

Till the East and West were lost in the South, and the
North was no more, and he stood
Face to face with the ancient dream through his hope
and his hardihood;
And the alien skies where the polar sun went round the
horizon's rim
And the nameless ice below belonged at last to the
race through him.

Prayer to the Man-bird

O MAN-BIRD, fierce and far, so long foretold
By wandering prophets of the strange and new,
O man-bird whom the nations now behold
Rounding the cloud and heading down the blue,
Where the world's fowl on their migrations flew
In ancient autumns, O Man, or Bird, or Thing,
Beating the foamless air with silver screw,
Swift on the wonder of thy linen wing,
Headless, yet with a brain to dare and do,
O hear, O help us in our auguring!

O thou who seemest to our solemn ken
The last great victor over time and space
And all the primal enemies of men,
With whom they battle for their dwelling place —
Victor, indeed, who meetest face to face
Winds and all thunder, and laughest at the sea,
The waves and waterspouts, and o'er the base
Of fire and flood and earthquake ridest free,
Free too o'er foul contagions of the race,
Pity the multitudes whose dread is thee!

Thou for whose larger vision lies the lap
Of earth outspread in glittering brown and green —
One whole, in clear proportions, like a map —
With mountain-range and forest and ravine,
And pasture-land and tilth, and narrow sheen
Of watercourse and highway far and near,

Prayer to the Man-Bird

And cities and men who run about between,
And ships by cape and isle, O Eye and Seer —
If but thou knowest what these things may mean —
The congregations of the people hear!

Thou, the wild loosener of the law that bound
Our restless feet in journeys left and right
For sullen ages so close against the ground,
Terrible spirit, buoyant on the Bright,
Only achiever of liberty and light,
Floating in sunset with the evening star,
Like some dread symbol of the soul's delight,
Thou, of man's Hope the awful avatar,
Alert to outspeed the coming of the night,
O hear the nations, hear us as we are!

Hear us and be to us the good we name!
Be not that curse whose shadow flies with thee!
Be not the demon of the sword and flame!
For as the air is more than land and sea,
So would the havoc and the horror be.
Scatter not blood in God's high atmosphere,
Unsullied and silent from eternity,
To drench the fields whose corn is in the ear
After old wars . . . lest we forever flee
The House of Peace that we are building here.

Upland Lights

(*Mount Aery.*)

HASTE, courtier, from ancestral halls,
Where hang the shields of ancient knights;
Haste, ere the snow on Aery falls,
And come to us at Upland Lights.

The pines lie thick atop the hill,
And by their margin on the slope,
Where old world-winds are blowing still,
We've built to west our house of hope.

Haste, courtier, up the greenwood trail,
When moons are full and cool the nights;
And sleep with us while sink the pale
Autumnal stars o'er Upland Lights.

Then rouse with us, carouse with us
At morn in spiritual mirth,
While the gray mists diaphanous
Half hide and half reveal the earth.

For over them, as o'er calm seas,
The sun shall strike; and as they break,
We mark the nearer rocks and trees,
And then the valley, then the lake,

Upland Lights

And then far off the mountain chain,
So blue against the long blue sky;
And, like ship's watchmen on the main,
We drink the world with open eye.

And, courtier, if thou ailing be
With secret grudge or silent woe,
Wait through our afternoon, and see
At Upland Lights the afterglow;

See o'er those violet peaks the belts
Of lilac, lavender, and green,
How each to other softly melts,
Or fades with crimson streaks between;

See, tier o'er tier, the gold clouds strew
Their vast and flaming arc above,
While just beneath, in skies still blue,
A white star shines, the star of love.

And if the king decree a march,
A siege, or silver tribute-fee,
A pageant or triumphal arch,
What matters? — let the king decree.

The Ruined House

COME, come away! —
White was this house of ours,
Vanished to-day;
Warm in the shrubs and flowers,
Radiant in rainbow showers,
Facing the sunset's towers,
Golden as they.

House of desire! —
Born that there poets might
Sleep and aspire!
Fragrant in full-moon light,
Rustling her vines by night,
Watching the comet's bright
Midsummer fire!

Let us be gone!
Fouly her rafters smolder
In the gray dawn;
And the black chimney shoulder,
Lone as the mountain boulder,
Stands, while the winter's colder
Winds come on.

To an Elf

(*Edith C—.*)

YOU elfin creature of these underwoods,
Poised in a plat of moonlight on ethereal
Pinions, beside my secret mountain-spring,
Upon a rock, akimbo and imperial,
You little Mischief, pert as any king,
Are you some insect-spirit of the floods,
Or is your quaint diaphanous material
Some eery distillation of the mist,
Or braid of tickling gossamers atwist?
And can you weep or tell me anything?

The Scarlet Skater

(Epilogue for the Winter of 1908-9, Madison.)

O CITY of the inland domes along the Winter's
track,

Whose hills were white by day and night o'er lakes
of Arctic fire,

Where the blue air drove your ice-boats out beside
the bluffs and back,

'Twas there among your skaters that I found my
heart's desire —

The tasseled head, the cloak of red,
The swiftest of your skaters with the feet that
never tire!

Hands across we whirled away — away from all the
rest

At set of sun, through silent wastes, and paths of
orange fire,

Onward to the purple coves and woods below the west,
Where the rumbling ice was greener and the world-
end winds were higher —

Round tasseled cap and scarlet wrap,
The fleetest of your skaters with the stroke that
would not tire.

With hands still fast, unharmed, at last around, around
we bore,

At moonrise through the twilight, down a strip of
lunar fire,

The Scarlet Skater

Orion floating up the south, where summer nights before,

I'd seen from out my light canoe the coming of the
Lyre —

From light canoe, ere yet I flew
With her, the scarlet skater with the starlight
streaming by her.

O City of the inland domes beneath the polar star
(Gold light, silver light, bells in the spire),
Where the blue air drove your ice-boats out along the
bluffs afar,

'Twas there among your daughters that I found my
soul's desire —

The flaming wings, the thrill of things,
The Spirit of the Far and Wide whose feet can
never tire.

The Scholar's Return

ROBIN, *give another chirp in the apple tree!*
Robin, come and pull a worm and cock your head
at me!

After all the weary quest up and down the lands —
Castles on the green hills, sphinxes in the sands,
Cities by the river-lights, bridges far away,—
Here again and home again, nevermore to roam again,
Here again to-day!

After all the pedant zest in among the books —
Parchments old and red and gold in monastic nooks,
Hic and hoc and langedoc, Caxtons, Elzevirs,—
Here again and back again, nevermore to pack again,
After years and years!

After playing connoisseur at a painted wall —
Pea-green damsel, purple mamsell, king and seneschal,
Saintly soul and aureole, ruin and morass,—
Here with eyes to see again the haycock down the lea
again,
Lounging in the grass!

Robin, give another chirp in the apple tree!
Robin, come and pull a worm and cock your head
at me!

III. The Issues of Life

Out From God's House

NEW dawns shall come, but I shall read the mass
No more, nor face Thy cross, O Christ, nor ring
The silver bell, nor golden censer swing
Down fuming aisles, God's angel as I pass,
Between the high saints in cathedral glass,
No more, nor never mellow Aves sing
At twilight, when the weary people bring
The long day's burden through the gates of brass

To Mary Mother.

Ah, new dawns shall come,
New eves shall follow; but it is my grief
Of dawns, of eves, to have attained the sum
In love and vision: in mine unbelief
I leave God's house, like Zacharias, dumb,
Nor hold, as he, God's promise of relief.

A Psalm of the Prayerless

THE Christ of Creeds has lost his fame,
His bells are silent on the mount,
No candles on the altar flame,
And empty the baptismal fount;
The wine we drank was moldered must,
The blessed wafer but a crust.

Thou, too, fair Face, beyond all creeds,
Art sunk in ocean like a wraith,
A shadow cast by human needs,
Lost when we lost the light of faith —
The "Father" of this peopled shore
Becomes but idle metaphor.

Whilst that grim Somewhat of the mind,
The primal Cause, the cosmic One,
Though throned forever there behind,
Gleams colder than the polar sun,
To whom, across the eternal ice,
Man never burned a sacrifice.

And yet we plant and store our shelves,
And kiss the young and lead the old,
And die for dreams we dreamed ourselves,
Because the Laws within us hold;
And, closely read, those Laws immerse
Our being in the Universe.

Epilogue

(To a privately printed collection of verses.)

I SANG (remembering how the free winds blow)
Mount, sea, and fire, and earth's refulgent days,
Vernal horizons and autumnal haze,
And moonlit cities in the midnight snow,
And found (mid griefs that met me on my ways)
Joy in the passion, pageantry, and show.

I sang (remembering how the stars abide)
Strong hands, and feet, and eyes uplifted still,
Resurgent hope, indomitable will,
And man who liveth, when his gods have died,
And found in singing (whatsoever my skill)
Joy in the grandeur of his strength and pride.

But the World-Spirit of the East and West,
That shapes the Seen and guides Life's ebb and flow,
The Loving-Kindness, named so long ago,
The everlasting Arms, the Mother-breast,
I scarce have known and I may never know —
And after joy, I crave the gift of rest.

The Rose

SILESIUS wrote: "The rose has never a why,"
Chiding man's questionings; and as I read,
Visions of quiet summer and blue sky,
And odorous blooms in gardens of the dead,
And shadows of their low leaves dancing by
On path or grass-plot, with the sunlight shed
Between, came gently to the inward eye,
And half in tears and half in joy I said:

"The rose may weep not when its sisters die,
Its being beauty, and beauty has no 'why,'
Else more than beauty, else a hope, a dream —
We, as the issue of a law more high,
Go up to Delphi where the eagles fly,
Or raise the columns of an Academe."

Pain and Speech

PAIN drove me from the music and the hall,
Far from the city and the golden truth,
In starless midnights of a blasted youth,
Out to the iron hills, beyond recall,
Where in lone speech I sought to burst my thrall,
Then to return with records, holding sooth
And song and art for men; but fang and tooth
Bit at my throat and choked my lungs with gall

And flame yet more.—

O art is to the free!
When pain is torn, like viper, from the breast,
Its head in dust beneath the heel, and we
Know it can nevermore uplift its crest—
Then, and then only, may we masters be,
Telling experience to East and West.

The Law with Life for Gloss

CHRIST, wilt thou stand once more and gloss the
Law?

If wage of ill be death and wage of good
Were surely life, O Rabbi, Master, could
My soul have reaped this harvest, chaff and straw,
And burning thistle, that had sowed with awe
In God's own sun, for love and livelihood —
Still trusting thee, O Christ, not understood —
A field as fair as husband ever saw?

But Christ: "Man's faith when man goes out to sow,
Even as man's grief when man comes back to reap,
Are more than seed or harvest — let them go.
Thy soul's experience as new winters sweep
New summers from the hills, at last shall know
To gloss the Law — for lo, the Law is deep."

Compensation

I KNOW the sorrows of the last abyss:
I walked the cold black pools without a star;
I lay on rock of unseen flint and spar;
I heard the execrable serpent hiss;
I dreamed of sun, fruit-tree, and virgin's kiss;
I woke alone with midnight near and far,
And everlasting hunger, keen to mar;
But I arose, and my reward is this:

I am no more one more amid the throng:
Though name be naught, and lips forever weak,
I seem to know at last of mighty song;
And with no blush, no tremor on the cheek,
I do claim consort with the great and strong
Who suffered ill and had the gift to speak.

Threefold Life

OUR life is threefold : toil for daily bread,
A little vintage and a little oil,
Consumes the middle day; and after toil,
When golden sunlight (else for joyance shed)
Once more behind the hill or holt is sped,
Then sleep must take us from the stars and foil
The joyance of the splendor-night and coil
Around us dreary shades or dreams of dread;

But in the space between our toil and sleep,
An hour at level dawn, at eve an hour,
A sacred watch we keep, or ought to keep:
Then stands the soul at peace as in a tower,
And hears the world's eternal music sweep,
And knows its heritage of light and power.

Wanderers

WHAT makes us wander? The west wind's call
and cry

When frost is on the stubble? The harvest moon
Crowning the hill-road? The diffused noon
Of summer and reaches of the unruffled sky?
Sunset? Or sea? Or rivers gliding by
Around the bluffs? Or snow against the face?
Or some dim sense of earth itself in space,
When at the spring the wild geese northward fly?

Is it in the blood? — impulse of veined feet
And sinewy thighs that wither if they rest?
Is it in the soul? — to whom the Incomplete
Is challenge to the immemorial quest,
The soul that leaves To-day in winding sheet
For some To-morrow with stars upon its breast.

Fragment

AND I am gone among the mighty dead,
And Vergil brings me myrtle for my head,
And Shelley leads me to the central fire;

But up and down the earth by moor and main
The evening scatters in the rust and rain
The unplucked roses of the dawn's desire.

Love Afar

I DARE not look, O Love, on thy dear grace,
On thine immortal eyes, nor hear thy song,
For O too sore I need thee and too long,
Too weak as yet to meet thee face to face.
Thy light would blind — for dark my dwelling
place —
Thy voice would wake old thoughts of right and
wrong,
And hopes which sleep, once beautiful and strong,
That would unman me with a dread disgrace:

Therefore, O Love, be as the evening star,
With amber light of land and sea between,
A high and gentle influence from afar,
Persuading from the common and the mean,
Still as the moon when full tides cross the bar
In the wide splendor of a night serene.

Il Ben dell' Intelletto

ONE evening wrought upon by loneliness
And brooding over many things that were —
My mountains and the hermit thrush and *her*
And years since then in cities of distress —
I visited in quest of mirthfulness
In crystal parlors, where on tiger skin
Stood with her white arm on her violin
A lady ever radiant to bless. . . .

But in the starlight on my still return:
“Though in my chamber but a taper burn,
Yet there the deathless music of the dead —
Not thus,” I thought, “my good I find, not thus,
Who saw the Titan bound by Æschylus
And touched the iron crown on Dante’s head.”

When Death Shall Come

WHEN death shall come (in spite of heart aflame
And wished-for morrows and new steps ahead
On toward the rivers and the morning-red),
And I shall lie the shattered fool of fame,
Draw not the curtain down the casement frame
Past the dear trees; and let no prayer be said,
Nor holy wine be brought nor holy bread
To rob the pagan of his light and name.

But get me balsam where the west wind stirr'th
And lay in odorous linen at my cheek,
That I may enter to the great Unknown
With old familiar memories of earth,
Of forest, brook, and bird, and mountain peak
And the blue sky around them, zone o'er zone!

Success

THE people have imagined a vain thing,
Touching the old issues that are life: Success
Will still be reckoned in the more or less
Of riches, lands, or station; still we bring
Our homage to those paltry gods who fling
These paltrier favors round — to Custom, Dress,
To Etiquette, Discretion, Cleverness —
And still would smile if once more one should sing:

“Success is character, as riches are
In knowledge which no fire nor fraud can take;
The good man, conscious of the morning star,
Shall own all lands, as lovely for his sake;
His station is with counselors afar,
Who for eternal justice work and wake.”

Χαίρε Φῶς!

SO, one by one, the inexorable years
Have taught how slow my feet, how far the sun:
Thy streams are wide, O world; thy clouds are dun;
Thy mountains shadowy with the gulfs of fears,
Where hangs the unfelled pine; thy dry wind seres;
And reptiles foul thy pleasant springs that run;
Yet though I die before the light be won,
That light more dim to me at last for tears,

O let it be on some supreme far height,
Facing some westward ocean, blue below,
With might to lean upon the verge — with might
To lift the arm and point that they may know,
Who seek me dying, I die unto the light,
And leave me dead in sunset lying so!

Obscurity

MY aims have brought me neither deed nor praise,
For they were bastards of unproved desire,
Got in unholy years to mock their sire
With fatal loves and desperate delays.
And thus for me no boisterous square shall blaze
With festal nights and pageantry of fire;
For me shall sound from no cathedral choir
The larger music of victorious days,

For me, the meagre, thwarted — O my soul,
Hast thou no tear? Nay, nay: there still abide
The mountain air, the sunset and the roll
Of thunder to the immemorial tide,
And the deep self of me within the Whole
Which, still by smiling, still is justified.

The Law Prevails

THE Law prevails! When every silver gain,
So proudly won from furious greed of lust,
Lies with man's broken spirit in the dust,
And earth's pure winds blow over him in vain,
He sees in visions, born of utter pain,
The Law anew — how beautiful and just —
And its profound, majestic "*Thou must*"
Sounds in his soul like thunder down the plain

At twilight.

And he turns, he looks, he lifts
His empty hands, his pleading arms to heaven —
Then roused anew, then on anew, he shifts
His burden off and scorns to be forgiven —
While manhood's pride, his soul's salvation still,
Unto "*Thou must*" makes answer bold: "*I will.*"

For a School of Artists

HEAR me at last! I've read old books and new;
I've housed with sages either side the sea;
I've asked my soul when stars were over me;
I've watched in cities men with work to do;
I've been at Delphi when the eagle flew;
I've wept alone in dark Gethsemane;
And now I know, whatever gods there be,
Whatever temples rise, my guess was true:

The Good is good — and we shall tend the fire,
The holy flame that burns behind the veil!
And each design of ours and each desire
That would deny the eternal Good shall fail —
And art, that mocks that sunbright temple, must
Lie soon or late a harlot in the dust.

To the Victor

MAN'S mind is larger than his brow of tears:
This hour is not my all of Time; this place
My all of Earth; nor this obscene disgrace
My all of Life; and thy complacent sneers
Shall not pronounce my doom to my compeers
Whilst the Hereafter lights me in the face,
And from the Past, as from the mountain's base,
Rise, as I rise, the long tumultuous cheers.

And who slays *me* must overcome a world:
Heroes at arms, and virgins who became
Mothers of children, prophecy and song;
Walls of old cities with their flags unfurled;
Peaks, headlands, ocean and its isles of fame —
And sun and moon and all that made me strong.

The Vagabond

AROUND the world I've been in many a guise,
In cape, or furs, or oilskin, fronting Fate;
Down rainy seas, through many a stormy strait,
By upland forests, over hills that rise
White, green, or crimson in the season skies;
Through civic arch and eagle-crested gate,
Imperial boulevards and halls of state;
And asked for Fame — and failed of every prize. . . .

Except, except the experienced eye and free,
And these impregnable old sides of mirth;
Except, except a glorious wisdom, worth
All the poor scorn these tatters bring to me:
Some feeling for the massy bulk of earth,
Some still monitions of mortality.

Mens Immortalis

I AM the Lord of Heaven and Hell; I reign
King from the blue void to dim gulfs below;
My counselors were gathered long ago
From conquered hosts of pleasure and of pain.
And when at sanction of their suzerain
They speak the wisdom only they can know,
My just decrees work thrift or overthrow
Throughout my old and eminent domain.

I plant the mountain where I laid the plain,
Create the seas and suns of afterglow,
Call the great thunder and the wild, slant rain,
And rear me shrines for worship or for show —
Destroying all, when, for my growth and gain,
I wish new worlds to rise, new winds to blow.

The Poet in the City

THE mornings sweep with gust and snow
Round tower and bridge and sordid halls,
And cold the yellow evenings glow
Behind the city's somber walls.

And day by day, with dreams unsaid,
And fiery hope that will not die,
We toil anew for daily bread,
My still unconquered soul and I.

Our sunbright peaks are lost; we see
No more the midland rivers flow;
The echoes of our mountain glee
Became a memory long ago.

For us no more the good ship lifts
Its bounding prow in midsea day;
Its smoke on blue horizons drifts,
Somewhere in ocean far away.

But the swift songs we may not sing
(That comrade scarce would mark if sung),
Like winds of an eternal spring
Still sound for us and keep us young.

And still we boast our mountain birth,
Our hardy nurture on the sea,
Which give us, as the lords of earth,
The strength to labor and be free.

Vigil

WHEN austere hunger, the stern lord of all,
Shut me from day, the mountainous and free,
To sell for bread my golden liberty,
In her chief city her obscurest thrall,
I turned to night, deep night primordial;
On the bleak housetop I went up to see,
And in my desolation came to me
The starry vision of the flaming wall.

By chastening sorrow rendered fit and wise,
My utter dearth gave me immortal eyes,
And when night broke the day's blue dome, I passed
Coeval, outward where eternity
Fills her long coasts with winds than ours more vast
And radiance whiter than the polar sea.

For a Drudger

THOU shalt win victory from this dull routine
And crown thy head with laurel when 'tis won:
This sure restraint thy youth was fain to shun
Will put new manhood in thy step and mien,
And in thy words, that something strong and keen
Which comes of life when life has bravely done —
Nor wilt thou all forget the mountain sun,
Nor the wild Alps with winds and snows between.

Thou shalt win life: for thou shalt learn with awe
How life is passion, but passion self-controlled,
That flames, even as the stars, by ancient law,—
Even as the stars that flame o'er field and fold,
Beyond earth's nether coasts of gust and flaw,
Bright, beautiful, unalterable and old.

With the Age

FOR good or ill, I master thy desire,
O age and country, making thy life mine;
I fell the forest and I lay the line;
I guide the cranes that swing the steel from fire
And flaring blast; I ride the inland flyer
Through the sown fields; in earth's vast rain and shine
I coast the sea with many a bold design,
And visit cities, climbing tower and spire,

And look abroad and say: "How strong ye are!
How ominous and wide! What new-born will
Is housed among ye, cities near and far
By cape and river and the changeless hill!
How large your dreams, when 'neath the polar star,
The winter night lies round ye, cold and still."

The Muse

SPIRIT, whom seer and singer name the Muse,
Be with me, radiant with thy peace and power,
When rocks are foaming and the main seas lower,
Or mountain sunsets widen with all hues;
Be with me when I wake in upland dew,
And when I walk in city dust or shower,
And when I love in hall or watch in tower;
Be with me when I win and when I lose!

Thou shalt be with me! The decree is mine!
And mine dominion and the primal will!
Though called no longer from Parnassus hill,
Thou shalt be with me and no less divine —
The immanent Vigilance, creating still
The nobler nature, the more bold design.

The World and the Soul

THE starry clouds about the world are blown,
And rain-fresh suns rise over mount and mead;
The slant pine sways in black crevasse; the weed
Swings its green locks in ocean on a stone;
The herds are on the hills; kings on the throne;
White cities rear their gates for show or need
And sing of heroes — and behold! a seed
Here on the coast of time, my soul is sown.

Yet lo! a world within its obscure cell —
Light, darkness, storms, shapes demon and divine,
The inward visions out of Heaven and Hell —
And choice to make the one or other mine!
Hold fast, my soul, hold fast and all is well!
Master thine own and every world is thine!

The Good Cause

ROUND the old house where lilacs bloomed and
died,

Armed with the mimic bow my father gave,
A boy I marched and dreamed of coast and cave
And bears descending from the mountain side;
Or down dusk vistas of the arbor, wide,
And cool with scent of grapes, I sped to save
Fair ladies lost in woods, for I was brave
And sought adventure equal to my pride.

That house is down; the high hour never came;
The boy remembered but in tale or jest,
Yet the good cause, O Life, is still the same;
I see the days, the scope, of East and West;
The shapes I see are of heroic name —
Scorn, poverty, disease — and this is best.

Not an Academician

YOUR courts and carven porticos excel,
Ye've set the busts and bound the books of fame,
Ye've taught me many a date and many a name
Of Heaven and Earth and seven pits of Hell;
And, planning once for long with ye to dwell,
I bought me purple robes and tried the same,
But ever on the midnight rose a flame —
O friends of austere memory, farewell!

No, no! persuade not: "Thou shalt trust the day,
The marble order, the preciser creed,
Thou shalt acknowledge law and bate the fire;"
For I must answer: "There is one only way —
The night revealed it — though I fall and bleed,
God help me, I will trust the heart's desire."

The Phantom Skater

THE moon has burst the winter cloud,
And silvers o'er the frozen reeds,
And up the forest stream, a bowed
And solitary skater speeds.

His scarf floats o'er his bended back,
His curved blades shimmer in the night;
He hears the rumbling ice-field crack,
With stroke to left, with stroke to right.

The wild wind whirls from leaf and limb
The dry snow out across his path;
In wild ravines afar and dim
The wolves of famine howl in wrath.

I know not where he closed the door,
Nor whither bound, nor what the clime;
But on he glides forevermore,
A skater of the olden time:

They say he craves no earthly bread,
They say he cannot fear nor tire,
They say that he is spirit-fed,
And name him Phantom, Hope, Desire.

I Feel Me Near to Some High Thing

I FEEL me near to some High Thing
That earth awaits from me,
But cannot find in all my journeying
What it may be.

I get no hint from hall or street,
From forest, hill, or plain,
Save now a sudden quickening of my feet,
Now some wild pain.

I only feel it should be done,
As Something great and true,
And that my hands could build it in the sun,
If I but knew.

The Test .

STILL at the wheel to labor down the sea
With battered funnels and with riven flags,
To overcome the mountains on bare crags
Above the thunder and the farthest tree,
To face a flaring city — the mad glee
And ululations of her reeling masques
And human drift — are self-sustaining tasks,
Because they challenge by their majesty.

But in these swamps behind the hovel yard
To make my obscene way through stench and flies
And oozy fibers, and refuse glass and shard,
And still to keep some token in my eyes
Of inward dignity and God's good skies,
This, this is manhood, this is truly hard.

The Crisis

THIS solemn hour God takes from out all Time —
Time that built up the mountains and the main,
And brought embattled empires down the plain,
And raised the cities seen in every clime —
This solemn hour God takes from out all Time,
Though Time with mightier issues pregnant be
Forevermore, and gives this hour to me,
Wherein to prove my manhood at the prime.

And I walk on, even to the martial voice
Of strong musicians that have faced the foe;
And with me stars and troops of angels go,
And God is watching, ready to rejoice. . . .
And I walk on . . . to where the roads of Choice
Are broad and narrow . . . shall I falter? . . . No!

Prayer in the House of Pain

O ALL-AND-ONE, whom once of old I knew
As Thought and Power behind the world and
through,

When in the calm detachment of the schools

I solved thy Name by reason and the rules:

Now on thy highway in the House of Pain,

O Long Forgot, I come to thee again.

O Thought and Power around us and above,

Whom life must solve, if life would live, as Love,

Though mocked by science and though dazed by grief,

I will believe — help thou mine unbelief!

IV. Love that Lost

The Bitterest Hour

THOU hast poured poison in my cup of gall!
The mountain echo o'er the lake and lea,
The mountain sunsets, flaming wild and free,
The mountain stillness of the stars, the fall
Of mountain waters, and the shadowy call
Of mountain birds had blessed and haunted me,
Blent with a mountain memory of thee,
When bitter years had urged me far from all:

O dear as inspiration! life and light,
And olden love, and immemorial mood
Were with me yet in sordid house and hall —
Till, like the pest, dank-fingered in the night,
Thy treachery fouled my soul's last livelihood,
And poured the poison in my cup of gall.

The Jester

(For M——.)

TIS little here nor there to you
Or me what now I say,
But just another rhyme or two
To pass the time of day.
You like my rhymes, you say you do,
They are so very gay.)

I knew a fool who followed one
Bright lady of the land.
The lady smiled the fool upon,
So regally and bland,
And had him put his coxcomb on
And sit and hold her hand.

Then would she smile his rhymes to hear,
And pet him and aver
Her fool was twenty times as dear
As other ladies' were.
(And right was she, for all the year
He rhymed to only her.)

For all the year he'd rhyme and dream
(O that's a fool his part),
"My lady's fair as fair may seem
And loves me without art,"—
Until the heart leapt up in him
(A fool may have a heart!)

The Jester

The lady marked his heart to leap
And thought, "Of every jest
That through my poor fool's brain can creep
This is indeed the best,"—
(For let a fool but love and weep
The whole fool stands confessed).

The fool he told (ah, foolishly),
His love he told so true;
He scarce did see her shallow glee
At what a fool could do;
Till jested she, "Nay, fool, ah me,
I am not worthy you."

The fool he did not understand
(His wits had little lore),
The fool he could not understand
(But ah, his heart was sore).
He left the lady of the land
And jested nevermore.

The lady of the land did grieve
For hours twenty-four;
Another fool she did receive
Long ere the next was o'er:
For every lady, I believe,
Must have one fool — or more.

The Jester

*('Tis little here nor there to you
Or me what now I say,
'Twas but another rhyme or two
To pass the time of day.
You like my rhymes, you say you do,
They are so very gay.)*

A Voyage

AS hunted as the veriest thief that flees
I crossed the city of dead hope that day,
With no farewells, and boarded at the quay
The high red liner, headed for the seas.
The brown smoke boiled from out her stack; the
 breeze
Fluttered two flags; the deck with folk was gay;
The whistle shrieked; the ropes were cast away,
And forth she steamed.

She passed the isles, the leas,
The green hills, left and right. Behind at home
The gray towers faded far. The setting sun
Shot golden lines along our wake of foam;
The ocean stars rose round us one by one.
I took my berth to close my eyes and weep;
I recked of nothing — I was on the deep.

Archilochus

KNOW'ST thou this tale? Archilochus, the Greek,
High browed and dark, like his own cliffs and sea
Ægean, had to bride Neobulé,
The fair and false, who spurned her poet, weak
For love (poor fool!) — but he arose to wreak
Vengeance which is his immortality;
And his iambics, having scorn in fee
And stings of truth, did like the vulture's beak

Rend at her heart — until despair from guile
And wantonness stripped off the spangled veil
Of good repute; and all men knew her vile —
And she did hang herself, she did. The gale
Blew all her garments round the Parian isle,
And none would gather them. Know'st thou the
tale?

The Drachenfels

OF old we housed us on the Hampshire hill,
We plucked the rose, unwound the columbine
From roadside birch, we planted woodland vine
Around the door; we leapt the rock, the rill;
We saw a hundred mountain suns all still
And gold go down the sky; with cheek on mine
A hundred eyes you sat beneath the pine
And twilight moon to hear the whippoorwill
With me of old.

And now! — deep seas divide,
Deep seas and deeper hate.— The Rhine is fair
Through mists of morning, and along its side
The Drachenfels uplifts its ruin bare
Before me; and I stand in sullen pride,
And of your lot will neither know nor care.

The Image of Delight

O HOW came I that loved stars, moon, and flame,
And unimaginable wind and sea,
All inner shrines and temples of the free,
Legends and hopes and golden books of fame;
I that upon the mountain carved my name
With cliffs and clouds and eagles over me,
O how came I to stoop to loving thee —
I that had never stooped before to shame?

O 'twas not thee! Too eager of a white
Far beauty and a voice to answer mine,
Myself I built an image of delight,
Which all one purple day I deemed divine —
And when it vanished in the fiery night,
I lost not thee, nor any shape of thine.

Postscript

LOVE! and my soul like ashes at thy feet!
Love! and blind tears and shattered hopes that
fell!

A mad forgiveness — and a wild farewell! —
And broken steps along an old-world street,
The seas between us! — then the withering heat —
The hate that, like a demon roused from hell,
Smote into flame the splendor and the spell,
Till thou to me wert ashes, Marguerite! —

Ah, I remember. — But when storms are done,
The wet leaves sparkle on the mountain tree;
The gold clouds lie about the setting sun;
The blue waves roll their white crests in from sea;
The gentle stars mount heaven one by one
With ancient light, as now they mount to me.

Resolve

THERE is an end. The fever and the pain,
The craving unto life with that far hope
Of mornings and of twilights, seen by two,
Shall torture me no more. The nightly stars
Beam downward and the sun and moon arise
And pass o'er earth with all its snows and grass
And towers and scattered graves, and seeds are blown
And pestilence with winds, and there be tears
For sorrow, smiles for joy. The Eternal Law
Works in all regions, bringing light and dark.
It works in me. It makes in me an end
Even of the woe which it before had wrought,
And leads me to the springs beyond the mount,
Beyond all populous cities, where each man
Must flee when all is lost, and in myself
I find at last the rod which strikes the rocks
Of living waters.

I have garnered long
O'er many lands, in many books. I own
Old trees and castles, cataracts and heights,
And orient cities dusk along the Nile,
Old fountains, marbles, pictures, red and gold,
From blue Valdarno, and old meters too
From Scio, Delphi, Mantua down the South,
From northern Weimar and the Avon stream,
And folksongs of the Alp and Apennine
And German rivers. Lo, I own the dream

Resolve

Of Plato and the hardness of Kant.
I have all wealth within me; I will look.

And I have that within me which shall build
Even from the fragments of dead hopes a house
Where I may dwell as I grow more a god.

V. Men of High Report

Lincoln

(For the unveiling of the replica of Weinman's statue of Lincoln, University Hill, Madison, Wisconsin, June 22, 1909.)

I.

THERE runs a simple argument
That, with the power to give a great man birth,
The insight and the exaltation
To judge him at his splendid worth
Best proves the vigor of a continent,
The blood that pulses in a nation.

We call ourselves the militant and wise
Heirs of dominion, lords of enterprise;
And 'tis no craven faith whose works we name:
The prairies sown, the factories aflame,
The mountain mines, the battle-fleets that came
Victorious home from islands of sunrise,
The cities towering to the windy skies —
A new-world faith that is a world's new fame!

Yet we are wiser than we think we are,
Nor walk we by that iron faith alone:
God and the west wind and the morning star
And manhood still are more than steel or stone! —
And among the proofs of what we do inherit
In the dominion of the spirit,
Through that material uproar, toil, and strife

Lincoln

Of our vast people's life,
There is a story, eloquent and low,
Waiting the consecrated scroll and pen,
More lovely, more momentous than we dream:
How, year by year, behind the blare and show,
Lincoln has prospered in the hearts of men;
And a great love compelleth to the theme.

II.

I stood among the watchers by the bed,
And caught the solemn cry of Stanton, when,
A statesman gifted with a prophet's ken,
Stanton looked up to God and said,
On the first moment the gaunt form lay dead,
"Now he belongs unto the ages!"—then,
Transfigured to a little child again,
Bowed in his hands that grim, defiant head.

III.

I marked a people, hearing what had come,
Whisper, as if Death housed in every street,
And look in each others' faces and grow dumb;
While, with the Stars and Stripes for winding sheet,
And roses and lilies at his head and feet,
He crossed the valleys to the muffled drum.
And still the white-haired mothers tell
How knell of bell and tolling bell,
Onward and overland,

Lincoln

On from the ocean strand,
Over the misty ridges,
Over the towns and bridges,
Over the river ports,
Over the farms and forts,
Mingled their aery music, far and high,
With April sunset and the evening sky.

IV.

Grief mellowed into love at Time's eclipse,
Our loftiest love from out our loftiest grief:
From him we have named the mountains and the ships,
We have named our children from the martyred chief;
And, whilst we write his works and words of state
For the proud archives of the Country's great,
How often it seems we like to linger best
Around the little things he did or said,
The quaint and kindly shift, the homespun jest,
Dear random memories of a father dead;
His image is in the cottage and the hall,
A tattered print perhaps, a bronze relief,
One calm and holy influence over all,
A household god that guards an old Belief;
And in a mood divine,
Elder than Christian psalm or pagan rite,
We have made his birthplace now the Nation's shrine,
Fencing the hut that bore him in the night,

Lincoln

As 'twere the mausoleum of a Line,
With granite colonnades and walls forever white.

V.

And poets, walking in the open places,
By marsh, or meadow, or Atlantic seas,
Twined him with Nature in their harmonies —
Folk-hero of the last among the races,
As elemental as the rocks and trees;
One of the world's old legendary faces,
Moving amid Earth's unknown destinies.
To Lowell he became like Plutarch's men,
Yet worked in sweetest clay from out the breast
Of the unexhausted West;
In Whitman's nocturne at the twilight hush
He seems a spirit come to dwell again
With odor of lilac and star and hermit thrush;
And, though the goodly hills of song grow dim
Beyond the smoke and traffic of to-day,
The poets somehow found the ancient way
And reached the summits when they sang of him.

VI.

The sculptors dropped their measuring rods,
Their cunning chisels from the gods,
From woman in her marble nakedness,
From what they carved of flowing veil or dress,
Perceiving something they might not condemn,

Lincoln

A majesty of unsolved loveliness,
Standing between the eternal sun and them.
And, in his gnarlèd face,
With shaggy brow and bearded base,
The corded hand, the length and reach of limb,
Their generous handicraft
Has proved how well they saw
No antic Nature's curious sport or whim
Who made him as she laughed,
But strict adjustment after subtlest law —
To finer sense a firm and ordered whole,
An output of a soul,
A frame, a visage for delight and awe,
Even were it not also witness unto Time
Of deeds sublime.
Thus, true of eye and hand,
The sculptors gave his statues to the land.

VII.

One stands in Boston's crowded square,
Stern to rebuke and pitiful to save,
One moment of his labors it stands there,
And from its feet is rising up the slave;
One by Chicago's noisy highway stands,
As if pronouncing on a civic fate,
Seeming to view a people's outstretched hands,
Seeming to feel the armies at the gate.

Lincoln

And now . . . and here . . .
In the young summer of the hundredth year,
So beautiful and still,
The scholar (he who learns to wait
For meanings than the rest more clear)
Unveileth on the everlasting hill,
With everlasting sky around its head,
Between the woodland inland waters,
Fronting a domèd city spread
In yonder distance like a garden bed,
This mighty Presence for our sons and daughters,
That shows him not in what he wrought,
But in the lonely grandeur of that trust
Which made him patient, strong, and just —
Yet seated, forever out of reach of ought
Of olden battles and the dread debate,
Whatever thunder comes or tempest blows;
Watching some Planet off the shores of Thought,
Not parted from but still above the state,
In long supremacy of high repose.

Kaiser Wilhelm in Bonn

THE Kaiser comes! and Rhineland's houses ring,
And windows flutter with the Black-white-red,
And Rhineland's sun is golden overhead,
And Rhineland's hymn a thousand voices sing,
As down the highway, where the white girls fling
The flowers of Rhineland for her lord to tread,
With hand on rein and helmet on the head,
The Kaiser comes — and every inch a King!

He knows the land of olden battles won;
He hears a sound and he will not forget,
And Rhineland's watch is still the true, the free;
And in this faith his eye hath dared the sun,
And his great heart, O Fatherland, hath set
Its larger hope for all mankind in thee.

Edgar Allan Poe

(January 19, 1909.)

NOT for the tales, where magic voices rave
In wizard night through haunted houses drear,
Till the spell makes me half in love with fear;
Not for the weirder art, the rhymèd stave
Wailing of lunar wood, and wan sea-wave,
And lamp, and ghostly bird, and bridal bier,
Lay I these verses, at this hundredth year,
Poe, on the marble of thy wintry grave;

But for the unconquerable soul that pain
Nor poverty with forty stripes and odd,
Fire in the throat, nor fever in the brain,
Death in the house, nor calumny abroad,
Could torture from a faith, not held in vain,
With service unto Beauty — unto God.

Walt Whitman

IN Washington in war-times, once I read,
When down the street the good gray poet came —
A roving vagabond unknown to fame —
From watches by the dying and the dead,
The old slouch hat upon his shaggy head,
His eyes aglow with earth's immortal flame,
Lincoln, who marked him from the window frame,
The judge of men, the deep-eyed Lincoln, said:
"That is a man."—

What poet hath juster meed
Whose brazen statue in the morning stands
O'er marble avenues of elder lands? —
In life, in death, that was a man indeed.—
O ye who 'gainst him lift your righteous hands,
And ye, the fops that ape his manhood, heed!

VI. America

Remarks

(On reading of the intended sale of the White Mountains to a lumber company.)

THE nations have rebuked us: "Greed for gold
Costs ye voice, vision; costs ye faith and fame."
Is this their envy? Shall we gloss our shame
Writing it "Progress," "enterprise"? Behold
Our civic life a trade, our rich men old
Bribing Opinion for an honest name,
And art and letters counted jest or blame,
When (but how seldom!) they will not be sold.

We traffic with our birthright: our domain
Of torrents thundering inland shall be dumb —
We have sold our cataracts to turn our mills;
And having lifted up our eyes in vain,
Whence our help cometh, but no more may come,
Now we would sell the everlasting hills!

Israel

(Written for the New Immigrants' Protective League.)

SINGER of hymns, by Sinai who adored
The Fire, the Trumpet, the eternal Law;
Builder of temples, from Zion's hill who saw
Dawn smite the heathen with Jehovah's sword;
Exiled of nations, long for no reward
Keeping thy Sabbaths and thy Feasts with awe;
Victor of sorrows on a bed of straw,
Come unto us, O Israel of the Lord!

Here, past the Gentile seas, the stars by name
Shine with the Ages' welcome; here anew
Thy rainbow towers; here the mountains wait.—
Come, and then fill us with thine holy flame! —
We have a word to speak, a work to do,
If once, like thine, our soul be consecrate.

Inauguration Ode

ONCE more to that high Capitol austere,
After the manner of our fathers dead,
Once more to-day, with starry ensign spread,
And pomp republican of cannoneer
And trump and wheeling horse, we come to hear
The oath of state and solemnize with dread
The coronation of no royal head,
On this great morning of our secular year.
Once more a new chief rises to proclaim
A fixed intent in first pronouncements bold,
Prophet and pontiff of the Nation's fame,
No less than guardian of her gates and gold,
Naming the parting Consul's goodly name —
Even now a proverb, like the men of old.

This festival is from a broad decree:
The visionary voice of wood and vale,
The uplands of the rising star, a tale
Of hundred rivers in the midlands free,
Savannahs southward by the cape and key,
And northern mountains at the great white trail,
And booming headlands in the wind and hail,
With beacons, flashing out to either sea,
Declared for this. To making this Event
Imperial cities half the world apart,
And homes on many a far horizon went,
With all of farm and freehold, mill and mart,

Inauguration Ode

That gives a multitudinous continent
Its million tasks, its one unconquered heart.

And now anew, in jubilee of mind,
Not voluble or vain, we have descried,
Marshalling to memory our proofs of pride,
The inscriptions on the ranged years behind —
Years that are monuments of humankind:
Laws, Battles, Voyages, graven large and wide,
We read, and Names where good is glorified;
And in our heritage our hope we find
For Times more pure, when, that swift cleansing done
To which we now awake, each man shall go
A tribune of the people in the sun;
For Times more strong, when, arming for the foe
With love and light, we set the useless gun
In gardens where our civic lilies grow.

Nor unto us, a folk so wide away
Beyond the sloping main we seem to own
A privacy of stars, O not alone
To us the Pageant and the Dream! — Fair Day!
God's witness white to what we do and say!
Princes and parliaments from zone to zone
Ponder our Cause; and this thy news is sown
For all the lands to harvest as they may! —
All, from our English Mother, to the old
Dominions of the immemorial Nile,

Inauguration Ode

And commonwealths below the Southern Cross,
From China, shedding her barbaric gold,
To what remains on that Sicilian isle
Of ruin and irrevocable loss.

And all whoso, my Country, do divine
(Dwellers at hand, or over leagues of foam)
What we devise to-day before this Dome,
Know that the matter for great song is thine,
Nor died with Cæsar on the Palatine.
And the great singer once again shall come,
Magnanimous to drive the meaning home
With solemn voice and full sonorous line! —
Some younger brother of the pristine blood
Of Milton, the voice men likened to the deep,
Who, in the immortal midday where he stood,
Beheld the puissant Nation on the Steep —
As 'twere an eagle mewing his hardihood,
As 'twere a strong man rousing himself from sleep.



VII. Five Cities

The Aery City

(*Göttingen, Germany.*)

THE aery city, temple and tower, sleeps.
O'er the broad fields, around her and below,
Lies the blue waste of far unfooted snow,
And takes no shadows from her walls and keeps.
The sun, like death, upon the blank sky creeps,
With pallid disk of silver, tacit, slow —
No winds betwixt this sun and city blow —
In adamantine day the city sleeps.

I pace beside her. All is dreamy cold.
I listen, and no music answers me:
I name the lost, the lucid hills of old,
The violet banks and the melodious lea,
The virgin breasts and sky and year of gold —
Mine, ere I crossed the unreturning sea.

Venice in Rain

(Early Morning.)

THE island city of our orient dreams
Sleeps in a mist from haunted seas, and gray
Horizons dimly shut her from the day,
And rain is on her streets and understreams;
From off St. Mark's no crimson banner gleams;
No balcony with floating silk is gay;
No sails Byzantine dot the sunless bay;
Yet now a beacon, now a window beams:

And by old marble houses here and there
Her gondolas lie moored at step or door,
Like barks funereal about to bear
This lyric race unto no earthly shore,
With Titian's painted dames of russet hair
And Tasso's lute — away forevermore.

The White Metropolis

(*Madison, Wisconsin.*)

✓
THE white metropolis of winter rose,
In icy splendor over drift and dune,
Midway from setting sun to rising moon,
On frosty skies of gleams and afterglows.
An aery place, a Venice of the snows,
With towers of crystal arabesque and rune,
And shimmering columns by many a frore lagoon,
She slumbered in imperial repose.

So still, so inland from the booming seas,
So clear, so far from battle-smoke or fen,
So cold, beyond all pestilence and fire —
A city with its own eternities,
Where hate nor love might enter in again,
Nor human cry, nor sorrow, nor desire.

New York in Sunset

THE island city of dominion stands,
Crowned with all turrets, o'er the waters' crest,
Throned, like the bright Cybèle of the West,
And hailed with cymbals in a million hands
Around her: yet serenely she commands
The inland vision and the ocean quest,
The new-born mistress of the world's unrest,
The beauty and the terror of the lands.

She sees the fields of harvest sown for her,
She sees the fortress set beside her gate,
Her hosts, her ships, she sees through storm and fire;
And hers all gifts of gold and spice and myrrh,
And hers all hopes, all hills and shores of fate,
And hers the fame of Babylon and Tyre.

Urbs Triumphans

(*San Francisco.*)

"The Genius of that city is not dead."

I WOKE in sunlight, young and warm,
And vowed to give my dream a form.
I clove the cliff, I raised the stone,
With Orphic music of mine own,
Till soon the inviolable thought
To portico and palm was wrought.—
A marble city of the free,
With gardens at the western sea!
I made a house with lighted crypts
For mysteries and manuscripts;
I carved a stair to galleries,
And gave all men the brazen keys;
I gave to Seer and Sayer halls
With ancient wisdom on the walls;
I stored a Doric vault with gold,
As measure just for bought and sold;
I filled for watch and ward a dome
With civic lore of Athens, Rome;
I struck the lyre with unbound hair;
I fostered rites of praise and prayer.
And East across her mountains brought
Devices of her sturdy thought,
From rattling loom a flag with stars,
From flaming forges scimitars;
And West from island shore to this

Urbs Triumphans

Sent quaint perfumes and artifice,
In bamboo dwellings multiplied
By white-robed Buddhists almond-eyed.

But ere the morning moon's eclipse
In seas, beyond the homing ships,
Earth smote my beauty, and my towers
In flame were withered with my flowers;
And o'er the dread reverberations
Red rose the silent sun of nations.
Then kings on far pavilioned slopes
In starlight asked new horoscopes;
Then sullen priests, with hand to eyes,
Muttered the Sibyl's old replies;
Then islands and dominions proud
In litanies of terror prayed;
And hid within the fiery cloud,
I only was the Unafraid.

Could earth be one with my desire? —
Earth, sprung from zones of solar fire!
She plants a vale with fern and tree,
And sinks it down the sunless sea;
She hangs the crags with vine and branch,
And shatters with the avalanche;
She wreathes her brow, she rends her breast,
She knows no worst, she seeks no best.

Urbs Triumphans

She claimed the form, but the design
Was, is, and is forever mine!

Behold in Java and Ceylon
The silent ages slumber on.
Their jungles, where the tiger crawls
By sultry moonlit waterfalls,
Hide rained palaces and halls—
Huge cities, dim, grotesque, and damp,
Where ebon door and ivory lamp
Had mocked the lightning and the rain
Ere Tyrian trader coasted Spain.
They perished by their soma bowls;
They left no hieroglyphs or scrolls;
Their names are lost, and legends tell
The earthquake smote them and they fell.

But in my larger towers to be
The bells will shout with brazen lips
To cities over land and sea
A jubilant apocalypse!
And o'er my gates shall stand the line,
By my imperial decree:
*"I am a Symbol and a Sign,
'A Witness and a Prophecy."*

VIII. The Unjust . . .

Prefatory

LET no man carve upon my monument,
Thinking to honor what he loved of me,
When I shall rest: "He had no enemy"—
O not to this, believe me, was I sent;
Even as I labor with my own intent
For sun and stars and earth's security,
I get myself good haters—let them be:
Carve not this slander on my monument.

"Nay," but I seem to hear my friends protest,
Who, though for me still ready to combat,
So often are given to untimely jest,
"We, who have known the breed you're railing at
And found you most yourself when angriest,
Will spare you any pleasantry like that."

Mein Tischgenosse

THAT head close-cropped as bowl or cannon-ball,
The snub-nose and the smirk of a mustache,
The puffy cheek, seamed with a villain gash
Got in a duel with a corporal,
That speckled vest, the ring upon the small
Left finger, where the ruby used to flash,
That air of "ladies-I-possess-the-cash,"
That tone of "gentlemen-I-know-it-all"—

My long lost enemy! — O how we'd glare
Across the table in the dear old days,
When cherries ripened in the German air,
And through the window shone the summer haze,
While Fraulein Emma sat between us there
And served demurely *Leberwurst* and *Kaes'*.

The Editor

I MET you first, when once for livelihood
I roamed Broadway, a vagrant from the boat,
A song of life for sale within my coat,
My soul on fire for all things large and good;
And there before your desk of walnut wood
With wide-spread shanks you smoked your pipe and
wrote

One of those quips the smart set loves to quote,
And looking round leered at me where I stood,
A dreamer and a lover. . . .

I marked your beard,
Frizzled and brown, your cold gray eyes, the tone
That meant "I rate men merely as the herd
May serve my turn — what is it?" As one reared
Among the mountains, conscious of mine own,
I bowed and went my ways without a word.

A Hypocrite

YOUR sleek hypocrisy in white cravat
May cheat your grocer on his office stool,
Your oily accents, plausible and cool,
May please your widowed tenant and her cat;
And pompous pride, in broadcloth, fed and fat,
May seem an oracle in Sunday school —
And yet I know you both for knave and fool;
So spare your grinning and put on your hat.

Eternity itself were scarce enough
To learn a true man's quality, were he
Still but the humblest of a peasant stripe;
But the poor tinsel of your proper stuff
I mark, established artist though you be,
With one glance sideways as I fill my pipe.

In College Days

TWELVE years ago. And can hate work so long,
Through seasons of so many a star and flower,
So many a mountain day and ocean hour,
So many friends who gave me song for song?
Twelve years ago. Though life with splendors
throng,
That youth of sallow skin and visage sour —
My first encounter with the evil power —
Is still the slanderer who did me wrong.

Yet my old hate is but the poet's hate
Even for the ideal villain of the mind —
The mind alert forever to create
Its perfect type from every form it find —
The man himself could enter at my gate
Like any stranger with his dog behind.

The Insulting Letter

THANKS for that insult.— I had too much peace:
In the stone tavern down in yonder vale
For a brief space too much of cakes and ale,
Too much of laughter. An ignoble ease
Had lured me from my vows and destinies.
I had forgot the torrent and the gale,
The cliff, the sunrise, and the forest trail,
And how I throve by nature but with these.

Thanks for that insult.— For it was your pen
Stirred the old blood and made me man again.
And crushing your letter with all thought of you,
Inviolat will and fiery dream, I rose;
Struck for the mountains, put my business through,
And stood victorious over larger foes.

My Defense

WHEN Fate trod madly on my garden bed
And took her from me in the early May,
Just as she tucked the living seeds away
With those deft fingers, kneeling near the shed,
'Twas not enough that I should see her dead
And my house shattered; not enough — but they
Who hate my sort found villain things to say
And mantled me with slander where I bled.

But my defense, who saw and judged the whole,
Because she loved my passionate sad soul,
And deeper purport of my larger aim,
Spoke from those Places that the world denies —
Those Incommensurables with sea and skies —
“They cannot harm you: I am still the same.”

The Laird of Leith

(*T. L. D.*, 1904.)

MEN say, who heard him in the gardens read,
"Quaint connoisseur of verse and jest and
flower,

And courtly and patient in the evil hour,
This was a goodly gentleman indeed."

But I, who kept the house and from his greed
Hungered lean years on second-best and sour,
And mixed the drink that gave him speech and power,
Through all the soul that's left me break and bleed:

Not for myself; but for the city's just,—
Each kindly heart that struggles in the face,
Each honest hand that points, or voice that sings;
For when a hard man's laid away in dust,
Such praise is to the praisers their disgrace,
And one more outrage to the higher things.

Epilogue

READING my words, where stands incorporate
For good or ill — as rough-hewn marble bust
With shadow sprawling in the workshop's dust —
Each solid visage of the souls I hate,
Whom next (I asked myself) to contemplate,
From somber memories of old disgust?
But these were all; and beautiful and just
Rose in the soul of me my good and great.

Indeed, what men and women have I known
In my long journeys for the truth of things!
What sweet musicians and what bards full-grown,
What sturdy husbandmen at harvestings! —
And city by city with a voice its own
Hailing the sunrise and the King of kings!

IX. . . . and the Just

A Dedication

(For a privately printed collection of verse.)

YE gave me life and will for life to crave:
Desires for mighty suns, or high, or low,
For moons mysterious over cliffs of snow,
For the wild foam upon the midsea wave;
Swift joy in freeman, swift contempt for slave;
Thought which would bind and name the stars and
 know;
Passion that chastened in mine overthrow;
And speech, to justify my life, ye gave.

Life of my life, this late return of song
I give to you before the close of day;
Life of your life! which everlasting wrong
Shall have no power to baffle or betray,
O father, mother! — for ye watched so long,
Ye loved so long, and I was far away.

With Some Manuscript Poems

(To Ludwig Lewisohn.)

THIS charge to thee. Because I hold thee free
On stream or mount or at the temple's base,
As one not wavering to pride in place,
To brazen trumpet or to golden fee,
As one who in the pools of life can see
Still somewhat of old dignity and grace,
Still somewhat of the bright reflected face
Of cloud or sky or moon, this charge to thee:

I fear the pest of all-involving night,
I fear the fumes that, gathering round my head,
May choke to silence the one word of might
Life laid upon me: comrade, I am dead —
Thou livest, report me and my cause aright,
And lay for love a laurel on my bed.

The Sculptor

(*For R. T. M.*)

I WROUGHT unaided, save
By wind and wood and wave,
And night and Mars the red,
And poets dead.

No man from sun to sun,
Seeing me, said, "Well done";
No woman smiled and chose
For me a rose.

But thus my arm at length
Did win a silent strength—
Thus here the statue stands
For all the lands.

A Presentation

(To W. R. N., with "*Fragments of Empedocles in English Verse.*")

IN my last winter by Atlantic seas,
How often, when the long day's task was through,
I found in nights of friendliness with you
The quiet corner of the scholar's ease,
While you explored the Orphic liturgies,
Or old Pythagoras' mystic One and Two,
Or heartened me with Plato's larger view,
Or the world-epic of Empedocles:

It cost you little; but such things as these,
When man goes inland following his star,
When man goes inland where the strangers are,
Build him a house of goodly memories:
So take this book in token, and rejoice
That I am richer having heard your voice.

In Reply

(To G. S. V.)

I PONDERED how to answer gift with gift —
Your amber vellum with some book of gold
In crimson letters, that for you should hold
Meet harvest of some elder poet's thrift —
And heart beat wildly, and my soul did drift
Up life's dim eddies to the days of old,
When we together, wandering passion-souled,
Saw round the Mountain cloud and tempest lift,
Showing the Sungod and the Lyre.

And then
The distant magic of your verse I heard
Louder, and marked strange visions far and wide,
And, as one rapt beyond the light of men,
I murmured (altering a familiar word),
"The marvelous boy who conquered in his pride."

Invitation

(For G——.)

COME, voyage with me! Somewhere in ocean day
The porpoise bound from wave to wave away!
And in the sun the distant sail we'll see,
Guess what its lading, what its port may be;
And when the twilight purples in the blast,
And the red lamp is hoisted up the mast,
How bright our visions, our desires how free!
O sweet my lady, overseas with me!

Over the seas there is a golden hall
Where some old king set pictures on the wall;
Through the arched hangings in the door, I saw
The robed Hidalgo and the Cardinal.

There reels the Bacchus with his cloven crew;
Diana bathes, Acteon's hounds pursue;
The comely damsels, seen by Veronese,
Will drink the wondrous wine the Saviour drew.

And overseas are gardens of delight;
There antique urns, so still and cool and white,
And a carved Venus on a scalloped shell,
Gleam in the moon of blue Italian night.

There the tall cypress on the terrace looms
O'er shadowy roses of old-world perfumes,

Invitation

And down the marble steps, by Tiber's reeds,
The fireflies dart among the Roman tombs.

And overseas an inland lake there lies,
Where by a castle, under mountain skies,
Sails the slant shallop, with the one white wing,
On waters bluer than a mother's eyes.

There slope the vineyards in autumnal peace
Where loved and lingered the New Heloise,
And the far Alps are touched with rose, and day
Dies, and the mellow Angelus will cease.

Thither, O thither! and in the nights between
We'll watch the stars upon the deck unseen,
Trace their designs with finger — thus and so —
In ancient legends telling what they mean,
And think how once the same stars long ago
Guided Ulysses to his island queen.

Lady, Not Mine

(*For E—.*)

LADY, not mine the courtier's gracious part
To kiss thy hand in hall when lamps are hung,
And, with a poised address and ready tongue,
Speak as befits thy gentle birth and heart;
Nor mine to linger when the guests depart
And offer, after every song is sung,
The delicate verse that names thee fair and young,
Sweet rose of ladies, lady, as thou art:

But were we met in such a spot, I'd say:
"Come, let us take the moonlit marble way;
The nightingale is in the cypress tree;
And past the terrace the stream glides on to sea;
And when beyond the dim hills dawns the day,
The morning star shall sing my song to thee."

The Phantom Child

WHERE'ER I go, in flowers or snow,
In spring or winter tide,
Through cities builded long ago,
O'er prairies waste and wide,
A sweet, a wild, a phantom child
Goes ever at my side.

The sunlight in her hair that lies
Seems borne from o'er the sea,
There is a token in her eyes
Of skies that used to be
(The violet dyes of summer skies),
When she looks up at me.

She laughs as one untouched by fears,
She laughs and takes my hand,
She wanders with me through the years
And on from land to land,
But yet she cannot see my tears,
Nor would she understand.

She takes my hand; she sees me still
The laughing lad of old,
She thinks we wander on the hill
In plots of white and gold,
She stops to hear the whippoorwill
In woodlands dusk and cold.

The Phantom Child

And though I know our hills are far
And oceans ebb and flow,
I have no music, mirth, nor star
Whose grace I cherish so —
A memory that no sin can mar
Nor sorrow overthrow.

New York Days

(*To Ludwig Lewisohn.*)

'TIS something for a poet's lip —
Our memorable comradeship.

The Empire City of the isle
Threw down on us her awful smile.
"My fate be on you," said the Voice;
"Aspire, and if you can, rejoice. . . ."

We entered, through a portico,
By ample steps that flanged below,
A dome supreme and luminous,
But housing statues not for us;
And sullen made o'er marble tile
Dumb exit through the brazen stile:
The college of the liberal arts
Was not the college of our hearts —
We had some other ends to win. . . .

We saw the iron ships come in
From Brooklyn Bridge, the civic towers
That loomed too large for earth of ours,
The pits between, the smoky pall,
The stony shadows vertical
Aslant up many a windowed wall. . . .
I've read that in the Middle Age,
When Dante made his pilgrimage,

New York Days

Each Tuscan baron, born to feud,
Who housed in city walls imbued
With blood of Ghibelline and Guelf,
Built a high watch-tower for himself,
And travelers over Alps looked down
On many a grim imperial town
That rose in rugged silhouette
Of parapet by parapet
Without a spire, a tree, a home —
'Twas thus with Pisa, Florence, Rome.
But here it seemed some giant broods
Had raised the bulwarks of their feuds
And mastered Titan altitudes!

We watched on slopes of Morningside
Broad Hudson wrestling with the tide,
Or from the granite balustrades
The sunset o'er the Palisades,
Where glowed the Cosmos in the west,
Like lightning flashes made to rest
And lie an hour manifest. . . .

We passed in moonlight down the malls
Beneath the dusky citadels;
We wound from curve to curve in cars
On lofty girders under stars;
We drank in music-halls, aflame
With lantern green and scarlet dame;

New York Days

And held, where passion most was rife,
Our fevered talk of human life. . . .

And through the snow, the wind, the gloom,
We journeyed to each other's room,
In those lamp-lit ærial crypts,
Piled with our books and manuscripts —
So far above the flash and roar
We seemed encaved forevermore
Upon some cliff or mountain shore;
We read in bardic ecstasies
Catullus or Simonides,
Or chanted verses of our own
In slow sonorous monotone,
That sometimes clove so true and free,
To us 'twas immortality;
We shared the agony of tears
Pierced by the ignominious years,
And times there were when we were three,
But late it grows and where is he?

And I long since was inland driven
To climb the hills of God as given,
While you again are by those seas
With more of vision, power, peace.
We overcame. But 'twas the press
Of no ignoble restlessness —
Outside the law yet not outside,

New York Days

By austere issues justified,
And justified, were all else vain,
By brotherhood of song and pain.

To Friends

THESE verses to my friends: for scattered far
In many a land, O friends of mine, ye are.
Do ye remember, too? O ye who hear
White Mountain echoes all the northern year,
And ye who see snowfields of cotton-boll
In Carolinas, and ye twain who cull
The poppies on Italian fields and seize
Those golden sunsets for Rome's galleries,
Do ye remember? Ye of Lac de Genève,
Between blue Jura and our own Salève,
Do ye remember, Franks of Switzerland?
And ye in utmost Moscow, with the hand
Secret and steady for that freedom yet
Ye swore at Göttingen, do ye forget?
And ye beneath the Drachenfels am Rhein,
Where books and wine and song and mellow shine
Of quiet suns made life almost divine,
And Fatherland, true Fatherland of mine?
And ye who walk the cities of the West,
And feel alone the teeming world's unrest,
Once felt together — and thou, too, tried and brave,
Who scatterest violets on an English grave,
Dost thou remember?

The same stars arise
All round the earth but lead us otherwise.

In Memoriam

(Borden P. Bowne.)

THE gates of time swing to: our wisest head,
Our soundest heart, our loftiest soul is dead.
But death like this, crowning a long success,
Gives exaltation to our helplessness,
Repeating, louder than all vain lament,
'Gainst death itself the one great argument —
Even this: a man so disciplined in truth,
In freedom, labor, courtesy, and ruth,
So disciplined, amid earth's age-old wars,
To see even here the light of all the stars,
Must be, wherever God will have him come,
With the eternal anywhere at home.

X. Translation and Paraphrase

The Creation of the Morrow

(From the Sanscrit.)

YAMA was gone. The gods consoling said:
"O weep not, Yami," and they raised her head;
But "Yama is gone, he will not come again,"
She murmured nor would yet be comforted.

Then mused the gods: "She weeps, remembering still
Their sleeps and kisses on the purple hill —
Let us create the night."— The night was born
With starry shades and winds invisible.

So came the morrow that ere then was not,
And many morrows — Yami left her cot,
And played with flowers on the mead in mirth,
Tossing them idly. Yama was forgot.

Heraclitus, the Obscure ¹

(For W. R. N.)

I.

SAID Heraclitus on the palace steps,
Beholding wide: "Ephesians, ye are mad;
Ye feed like cattle, hearing no strange sound;
Ye crawl like blind-worms, seeing not a light
And a far flame; ye sleep, wine-drenched and dull,
And know the Logos not. The Eternal Law,
The Weaver of night and day, and body and soul,
Ye will not know; although each son of man
For that same Law shall fight, as for a wall,
And yield no foot. What few have lit a lamp,
In the dark night they wander and damp fields,
And turn much earth and scatter sod and sand,
Grubbing for fools' gold, while the lamp goes out
And they are wide from house. For vain are eyes
Unto barbaric souls.

"Mad folk, mad folk!

Along the highways, after olden use,
Reel the crazed votaries with the phallos raised
And Dionysos hail! and obscene girls
Uncloak their lust unshamed. Ye kneel and beg
A gift of some vile stone ye name a god —
Zeus, Aphrodite, Heré, Artemis —

¹ Based upon the *Fragments*, but the historical Heraclitus was a *Basileus*, not a King.

Heraclitus, the Obscure

But hear no thunder, see no moon. Ye lave
Your crimes of blood with steaming blood away —
Lustration wise as who has fouled his hands
With the green dung should lave his hands with dung
And deem him clean!

“Mad folk! and how ye bark,
Like hounds, at me ye know not. As the shag
And lap-eared ass, blinking between the gold
And yellowish chaff, ye take the chaff at last —
Twelve thousand of ye value not one good —
And shall I rest the king of such as ye,
Speaking a Law no king yet ever spake,
Ye comprehending not? — There lie my robes
For who may find them. Naked as the night
I will go forth, I will return no more.”

And so he passed to where the tropic hills
Stood blue behind the city, and the tides
Swept long unfooted sands beyond the walls.

II.

Said Heraclitus standing by the sea,
Beholding wide: “The Law shall not be lost.
The fire descends from heaven upon the sea,
Then from the sea whirls up the water-spout,
Mixed with black rolling thunder and quick flame,
To heaven again. So fire to water, water to fire
wends,

Heraclitus, the Obscure

And water unto earth. Lo, all things change,
But though none know the Law shall not be lost.

“ Bathe, laughing children, in Cayster stream,
Under hot day; ye bathe O never again
In this same stream, which yet is not the same;
For all things flow, for all things flow forever,
And though none know the Law shall not be lost.

“ The sea-fish shoal about the headland rocks
Deep in blue water; but those I enticed
Out to the air are dead on the salt grass;
And men whose white sails lured them to the main
Lie still below and sea-weeds wrap their skulls.
The sunbright day reeks foul with purplish death,
The brack and deadly ocean teems with life;
Each element to each and after his kind,
But though none know the Law shall not be lost.

“ I hear far battles hid beyond the clouds
That float on the western waves — there is new war
Somewhere on coast or plain; but all is war;
The father of all, the king of all is war;
And some he makes to gods and some to men,
Some slaves, some free, creating, slaying all.
Lo, peace is strife, and strife is peace forever.
Man dies his life and lives his death each day,
But though none know the Law shall not be lost.

Heraclitus, the Obscure

“Only the Rhythm, only the Law abides.
The Pendulum that measures life and death,
And all the forms of fire, swings unchanged
Under the Law, which will be called high Zeus,
And yet will not (for 'tis above all men,
But all gods too). . . . And day and night return,
Winter and summer, autumn and spring return,
And the world-æons of fire-death and -birth.
And though none know the Law shall not be lost.

“For I will speak. The Sibyl, wild and shunned,
Endures in memories of a thousand years —
Though all her words were turbulent and dark,
Endureth she, for through her speaks the god.”

III.

Far from the city deep in autumn night
He laid his scroll in shrine of Artemis —
Where strangers found it after many years.

Achilles and Athene

(A Picture from the Iliad.)

WHEN Wrath had got the heart of Thetis' son
And toward the bench, where Agamemnon
sate,

With glaring eye and shaggy breast dilate,
He made, his hand on hilt, to slay anon
The King of men for Briseis, dearly won
And darkly threatened, thus to close debate,
The white-armed Heré, from Olympus gate,
Sent down Athené: there she stood and none
Beheld, save only swift Achilles; there
She placed her fingers on his yellow hair,
And as he turned, astonished, to upbraid,
"Put up thy sword," she chided, "and forbear."
And Thetis' son was silent and obeyed,
Holding the promise of a goddess' care.

A Home-Coming Long Ago

(*Catullus, XXXI.*)

O MY gem of almost-islands and of islands, Sirmio,

Whatsoever, wheresoever lucid inland waters flow,
Wheresoever out in ocean sun may shine or wind may
blow!

O how gladly, O how madly I rejoice again to be
(After all the Asian lowlands wandered over wearily)
Here at last, my little island, safe at last with home
and thee!

What so dear as cares completed when the mind lays
down the load,

And the way-worn feet that wandered take again the
homeward road;

And upon the bed we longed for we can go to sleep
again —

O alone reward enough for all the labor, all the pain!
Hail, my Sirmio, the lovely, greet your master and be
gay;

Greet him, all ye Lydian billows, plashing up the
sands at play —

With your laughter greet Catullus, back again with
you to-day.

A Roman Pleasantry

(*Catullus, XXVI.*)

YOUR country-house is not exposed
To any blustering gale —
But, since your mortgagees foreclosed,
It's now exposed for sale:
And *this* exposure, none can doubt,
Is likely, friend, to freeze you out.

The Sail

(From the Russian.)

WHITE gleams the lone sail far from shore
In purple mists and boundless wind;
What seeketh she in lands before?
What has she left in homes behind?

The foam is thrown about her prow,
Her bending mast is beat with spray;
But ah, no hope she seeketh now,
And from no hope she rides away.

Beneath, blue streams of ocean lea;
Above, blue day in east and west —
But for the wild storm yearneth she,
As if amid the storm were rest.

Buddha

(From the German of Arno Holz.)

BY night around my temple grove
watch seventy brazen cows.
A thousand mottled stone lampions flicker.

Upon a red throne of lac
I sit in the Holy of Holies.

Over me
through the beams of sandalwood,
in the ceiling's open square,
stand the stars.

I blink.

Were I now to rise up,
my ivory shoulders would splinter the roof,
and the oval diamond upon my brow
would stave in the moon.

The chubby priests may snore away.

I rise not up.
I sit with legs crossed under
and observe my navel.

It is a blood red ruby
in a naked belly of gold.

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Choice

(From the Norwegian of Björnson.)

MY choice be April, then,
In which departs the old,
In which the new takes hold,
With hubbub round again —
For peace is not the best,
But doing things with zest.

My choice be April, then,
Because it storms and sweeps,
Because it smiles and weeps,
And owns the strength of ten —
Because it stirs the powers
Whence summer and its flowers.

The Ideal

(From du Bellay.)

IF this our life be briefer than a morn
In the eternal, and the years drive hence
The unreturning days without defense,
And perishable be all things ever born,
What weenest, soul, imprisoned and forlorn?—
In these bleak regions where were joy and whence?—
When for thy voyaging to the bright Intense
Thou hast the wings, the lovely, the unshorn!

There is the good which each good man desires,
The rest to which the unresting world aspires,
The lyric love that wipeth every tear;
And there the soul before the great white throne
The immortal beauty shall behold and own,
Whose voice and shadow it had worshiped here.

Rondeau

D*U temps que j'étais belle:* I dreamed of late
That you were old, Marie, and by the grate,
With book and eyelids closed, you said the rhymes
That took you back to Paris and the chimes
Of Montmorenci and the garden gate.

How old, how old, Marie: my lady sate
As wan and withered as the eldest Fate,
And crooned, "He sang to me in other times —
Du temps que j'étais belle."

And when I woke, I woke no more in hate:
I heard the oriole singing to his mate,
I saw the plumed castanias and limes,
And morn's horizon binding all the climes,
And knew no words of death more desolate —
Du temps que j'étais belle.

Mignon

(*For Helen.*)

KNOW'ST thou the land where bloom the citron
rows,

In dusky leaves the golden orange glows,
And soft a wind is borne from bluest sky,
And stands the myrtle still, the laurel high?
Know'st thou it well? —

O there, O there
Would I with thee, O my belovèd, fare!

Know'st thou the house? On pillars rest the beams;
The hall it shines; the shimmering room it gleams;
And marble statues stand and look at me —
(What have men done, O my poor child, to thee!)—
Know'st thou it well? —

O there, O there
Would I with thee, O my protector, fare!

Know'st thou the hill, its path in clouds and gray?
The mule he seeks through mountain mist his way;
In caverns dwell the dragons' ancient broods;
Down plunge the cliffs, and over them the floods.
Know'st thou it well? —

O there, O there
Lies our own way. O father, let us fare!

XI. Midway Upon the Road



Midway Upon the Road

MIDWAY upon the road, encountering Death —
(Unseen before, or seen so far aside)
Death, the revealer and the proof of Life —
And, though hereafter I may cross new streams,
And voyage unto new isles, and see new towers,
And hear new voices, not for aught of this
Shall I be other than I was. The man
Encountering Death midway upon the road,
When he is statured equal to the trial,
Shall walk thereafter other than before —
Not sorrowing forever, but resolved
To realize the purport of himself,
Subduing haste and passion, serving men
With nobler thought and action in the day,
And sleeping night by night a goodly sleep,
Tented with quiet memories of his dead.

For the New Year

MAY you have good in the Four Seasons:

In Winter, may you read beautiful books, watch the fire leap and crackle in the grate, and see through the window the full moon on the drift and trees;

In Spring, may there be children at the table, and through the open door sight of blossoming shrubs and sound of singing birds;

In Summer, may there come to you friends from over mountain and sea, and may you find shady groves and cool springs wherever you walk;

In Autumn, may you teach others gentleness and courage and truth, and look at the sunset from quiet hills.

THE END

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